

REGION 6 — MOHAWK VALLEY

The first three months of the year were all above normal temperature, and March was much above normal in precipitation. January excess temperature averaged 9 degrees, February 8, and March 5, 6. Streams and lakes were open more and earlier than usual, with ducks and gulls not concentrated. Wintering individuals of summer species were above par in kinds and numbers, and most of the truly winter species were absent or scarce. Spring arrivals were much in evidence by early March; will be reported with spring migration report.

Loons — Ducks:

A Great Blue Heron was seen repeatedly at Collins Lake through January and February. The first local record of Blue Goose was obtained March 15 on State Farm Road (Van Vorst, Hallenbeck, et al). There was a flight of 200 Canada Geese February 3 at Niskayuna. An unusual variety of ducks was reported, but in small numbers, and from scattered locations. Thirty Pintails were reported at Vischers Ferry February 24. An Oldsquaw was seen at the Troy dam February 20, and two pairs of Hooded Mergansers at Saratoga Lake January 1.

Hawks — Owls:

There have been occasional reports of hawks, in some variety. Owls, as usual, were unreported. An unusual record of four Turkey Vultures was obtained March 29 at Indian Ladder (Scotland). Several Bald Eagles were seen in February and March.

Swifts — Shrikes:

A Killdeer spent January and February at Collins Lake. A total of seven Great Black-backed Gulls were seen at three locations along the Mohawk February 23 (Yunick) and three at Poentic Kill March 4 (Stone). Although Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were in less than usual numbers, 230 Herring Gulls were at Saratoga Lake February 23. There have been a few scattered reports of Mourning Dove, plus a flock of fifteen at Vischers Ponds January 17. Belted Kingfisher reported February 8 and March 4, and Yellow-shafted Flicker January 11 and March 8. Downy Woodpecker flocked at Vischers Ponds January 17. Canada Jay, rare here, was seen at Delmar March 15 (Van Vorst et al). American Crow was unusually scarce in December and January; and Winter Wren in less numbers than usual. There were isolated reports of American Robin, one each in December, January and February. Hermit Thrush was reported in January and in February. Golden-crowned Kinglets were fewer than usual, as were Cedar Waxwings.

Vireos — Sparrows:

Two Myrtle Warblers on February 23 represent the second local Winter record (Stone). Eastern Meadowlark was recorded on January 1. There were two records of Purple Grackle, two on January 1 and one on January 11. Local flocks of Evening Grosbeaks have been holding out well through March. Purple Finch was scarce, while Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin were observed in unusually large numbers. The shores of Collins Lake harbored four White-throated Sparrows in January and February, and four Swamp Sparrows in January. Five Lapland Longspurs were recorded at Niskayuna January 1, and two on February 22 at Six Mile Reservoir.

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REGION 7 — NEW YORK AND LOWER HUDSON VALLEY

This winter was one of the mildest on record. Even at the Bear Mountain weather station, 1,300 feet above sea level, the temperature never went down to zero. Snowfall was less than 50% of normal. However, rainfall set new monthly records in January and March; February was six degrees warmer than normal, with more than an inch deficiency in precipitation.

These statistics would scarcely explain the spectacular influx of northern visitors, notably Pine Siskins, Redpolls, and Crossbills. Yet there the northern birds were — all through February and March — with a sprinkling of Evening and Pine Grosbeaks. At the same time, many half-hardy species remained, making it possible though incongruous to list Towhee and Crossbill on the same date.

Ponds and lakes were frozen over only in Sullivan County and parts of Orange and Putnam Counties. In the northern portion of the region, the usual winter sparrows and finches were down in numbers, perhaps merely dispersed more widely. Juncos, for example, were absent from Sullivan County and Song Sparrows were rare from late fall to mid-March.

Loons — Ducks:

Common Loons appeared on Amawalk Reservoir, Westchester County, on Dec. 7 and 20 (Ralph W. Odell, Jr., and Donald R. Fowler). Pied-billed Grebes wintered in small numbers, with a high count of four on Mar. 8 at West Branch Reservoir, Putnam County (Stanley O. Grierson). Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Steinhardt counted 39 Cormorants at Mamaroneck in mid-winter. Six Black-crowned Night Herons at Rye on Jan. 31 were unseasonable (Watson B. Hastings). So were six Pintails at Cross River Reservoir on Dec. 20 (Robert J. Hammerschlag). Ring-necked Ducks wintered in Rockland County in small numbers; Hastings reports them less numerous than formerly on Kensico Reservoir, Westchester. Other ducks, especially Black Ducks and American Mergansers, were abnormally abundant throughout the region. More Hooded Merganser reports than usual were received. Two female Buffleheads visited Mongaup Reservoir, Sullivan County (Wilber P. Carr).

Hawks — Owls:

Buteos moved northward early. Many observers in Rockland and Westchester Counties and nearby Fairfield County, Conn., reported a sizable movement on Mar. 16, with counts of as many as 40 or 50 Red-shoulders, Red-tails, and Broad-wings in an hour. An early Broad-wing was seen in Sullivan County on Mar. 7 (Carr). Bald Eagles were normally numerous on the Hudson despite the absence of their customary ice-cake perches; one Bald Eagle on Sullivan County reservoirs bore conspicuous white markings on the back and underparts (partial albino), Carr reports. Several Rough-legged Hawks were recorded during the winter. Turkey Vultures appeared as early as Feb. 26 (Grierson).

On Dec. 27, Mr. and Mrs. Grierson saw a Goshawk at Katonah; an immature of this species had been killed in collision with a picture window in Bedford Hills on Oct. 26 (Grierson).

Ruffed Grouse seemed to be at least normally common in Sullivan County, only slightly down in the Hudson Highlands. Coot and Killdeer wintered in numbers far above average. Woodcock were heard in courtship flight as early as Mar. 15 (Theodore B. Eiben). A flock of 40 Purple Sandpipers at Mamaroneck on Jan. 4 was remarkable (Ken Harte). Great Black-backed Gulls were more common than usual on the Hudson River.

Swifts — Shrikes:

Phoebes landed in great numbers about Mar. 20. Tree Swallows came early, Mar. 16 at West Nyack (Mrs. William G. Irving). The Tufted Titmouse is well established in Westchester (Grierson) and wintered for the first time at the Audubon Nature Center near Greenwich, Conn. (Hastings). Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported at only two feeding stations in lower Westchester (Harte). Sullivan County scored its first pair of Carolina Wrens, first seen on Mar. 1 (Carr). A new Mockingbird station for Rockland County is near Viola (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). Harte reports a Hermit Thrust for Jan. 17 in Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx. Cedar Waxwings were spottily distributed, sparse in Sullivan and abundant in Rockland and Westchester. The only Northern Shrike record dates from Sullivan County on Mar. 12 (Carr).

Vireos — Warblers:

A Baltimore Oriole turned up in Katonah on Dec. 20 (Miss Van Norden, Grierson). An immature male Western Tanager at Franklin, N. J., across the state line from Orange County, attracted much attention until it departed on Mar. 10. Two male Rusty Blackbirds visited feeders in Sullivan County almost daily after Jan. 2 (Carr); the first females arrived Mar. 18.

The House Finch colony at Stamford, Conn., is growing, and one bird was seen at Poundridge Reservation on Mar. 14 by Mrs. H. E. Dickenson and a **Scarsdale Audubon Society** party. A male Dickcissel wintered in Stamford (Mrs. Dickenson) and one, sometimes two, came to Dr. Hopper's feeder in Nyack from Oct. 19 to date.

The Kingbird

The treat of the winter, of course, was the abundance of northern finches. Records are too numerous to list in detail, but the following is a summary:

Evening Grosbeak — Sullivan County had a flock of 35 to 50 from November to March. A half dozen in Dobbs Ferry on Feb. 7 (N. Woodford, reported by Watson Hastings); a female at New City on Feb. 13 (Mrs. Frank Steffens); a pair at Milwood, Westchester, on Feb. 15 (Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Kuyk) and at Mt. Kisco on Feb. 22 (Andrew MacWaters).

Pine Grosbeak — Two males and four females or immatures at Shrub Oak on Jan. 3 (Ralph W. Odell, Jr.).

Pine Siskin — Abundant throughout the winter in the southern portion of our region; seen in Sullivan County during January only, but then in flocks up to 500 or more.

Redpoll — Greatest number in upward of 25 years. Earliest date, Feb. 11 at Katonah (Hammerschlag) and Feb. 12 in all other counties. Latest date before presstime, Mar. 22 at New City (**Rockland Audubon Society**). One flock of 250 at Katonah on Feb. 17 (Mrs. Frank McKown); a flock of 500 at Mount Ivy, Rockland, about the same date (Dr. Hopper); flocks of 500-plus in Sullivan County (Carr).

White-winged Crossbill — Noted at several points in Westchester and Rockland on Feb. 6 (Mr. and Mrs. Ralmond Wood, William Russell, Mrs. Edmund Barron) and Feb. 7 (Col. Allen M. Pope, Mrs. Javius Matsumoto). A flock of 15 at Palisades on Feb. 8 (Rockland Audubon) was the largest reported, but there were dozens of records for bands of 9 or 10 birds. Seen in Sullivan County only at Bethel (Carr).

Snow Bunting — Only one large flock, about 200 birds, is reported from the region, and this flock only for one day in Sullivan (Carr).

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REGION 8 — LONG ISLAND

February and March were mild with very little snow and migration began early. Wintering birds apparently suffered little; practically no freeze-ups allowed ducks to remain on most of the ponds and lakes. This resulted in large numbers of Anatinae (surface-feeding ducks) over-wintering, even around the shallow, easily-frozen Jones Beach Sanctuary pond. The surprisingly great numbers of Red and White-winged Crossbills, Siskins and Redpolls disappeared in February, and with their departure large flocks of Grackles, Red-wings and Cowbirds arrived. This vanguard of spring migrants was more marked than for several years and there was no cold weather to retard the movement. Song Sparrows appeared about the same time in early February as Meadowlarks began singing; and by February 10 Prairie Horned Larks were on territory, 17 pairs being counted at Jones Beach east of the tower along the ocean causeway grass strips. Soon Killdeer arrived and since there have been several record-breaking early reports of shorebirds.

Loons — Ducks:

There was a good flight of loons from March to mid-April: maximum 200 Red-throated Loons April 12. Horned Grebes were also common in late March; a few Double-crested Cormorants appeared in mid-April and on April 12, 75 Gannets were observed on the ocean off Jones Beach. The White Pelican which has been at Mill Neck Pond since last June set a new winter record here, and although its local movements may indicate an escaped or released bird, it forages for itself and added a tropical touch to a winter flock of swans and ducks. Large flocks of Brant were present on western bays into April and a big concentration of Canada Geese, with up to 20 Snow Geese, was reported on the potato fields of eastern Long Island near Wainscott. Among ducks large numbers of Gadwalls, Baldpates, Pintails and Green-winged Teal wintered. The European Teal, common wintering species a decade ago on western Long Island, has now become a very rare migrant: one at Jones Beach, March 21 (J. Elliott). The Harlequin Duck was recorded from Montauk, Atlantic Beach and the Rockaways; latest report: Atlantic Beach, April 12, two females (J. Mayer). Great concentrations of all three scoters were present in the ocean off the south barrier beaches in late March, early April, and a solid flock of 1,150 Oldsquaws in more sheltered waters at Fire Island Inlet, March 21-28.